

VZCZCXRO3397
OO RUEHCI
DE RUEHKT #0841/01 2541249
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 111249Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0736
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7111
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 7429
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2762
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5471
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6596
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3214
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0288
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4744
RUEHG/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2407
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3649
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMF/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHN/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000841

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2019

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM NP

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS' SHORT AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

REF: A. KTM 00813

1B. KTM 00756

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires, a.i., Jeffrey A. Moon. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (SBU) Summary: Nepal's Maoists continue to pursue short- and long-term strategies for returning to power in the Constituent Assembly. In the short term, they are working to persuade disaffected Madhesi parties to give them the 30 seats they need to gain a working majority. Over the long term, however, the Maoists recognize the limitations of temporary alliances and hope to lead a stable, "consensus" government that includes all major parties. The Maoists recognize that discharging "disqualified" Maoist combatants is the first step toward achieving a lasting peace, but accuse India of unspecified interference in the peace process. Extremists in each of the major parties are further complicating the process by preventing consensus on key issues. End Summary.

12. (C) The following report is based on Charge's September 9 meeting with Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Politburo member of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist and Constituent Assembly (CA) member. Mahara leads the Maoist party's Foreign Affairs and Organization Department. He was the party's chief peace negotiator during the insurgency.

SHORT-TERM COALITION BUILDING

13. (C) Mahara said the Maoists want back in the government and are well aware of the votes they need to take control of the CA. The Maoists, with 240 CA members, need the support of only 61 non-Maoist CA members to bring down the government. They already have 20 votes from a faction of the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF), and are confident that 10-12 members from the small parties would support a Maoist-led government. This leaves them roughly 30 votes short. If the other three Madhesi parties switched sides, the Maoists would pick up 62 additional votes, giving them the majority. Mahara said this scenario could play out if Vice President Jha, who is ethnically Madhesi, resigns his position over a long-simmering oath-taking controversy (ref A). The three Madhesi parties have implied that they will withdraw their support for the government if VP Jha quits. Mahara even suggested that the Maoists might agree to let

another party take the Prime Minister position.

¶4. (C) The Maoists would prefer to lead a consensus government including both the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML). The NC and UML are fractured internally, Mahara said, with half of the UML Central Committee members pushing to support the Maoists. NC leader G.P. Koirala's intense pressure to have his daughter, FM Sujata Koirala, appointed Deputy Prime Minister is causing open dissent in the NC. Mahara said the Maoist leadership is undecided on cutting a deal to bring the NC into a potential coalition. He opined that media rumors of Sujata being given a leadership position in a Maoist-NC coalition government in exchange for NC support were unfounded. He said such a decision would anger and divide NC's senior leadership and cause revolt in the Maoist rank and file.

LONG-TERM PEACE PROCESS

¶5. (C) Mahara said the "first task" in the peace process is the discharge of the 4,008 disqualified persons in Maoist cantonments. He commented the current instability in the ruling coalition has caused the discharge process to be put on the back burner, but it will fall into place after the government situation is resolved. The Maoists were concerned that the rehabilitation program to provide skills-training and financial assistance to disqualified persons, though well-coordinated by the UNDP, was being poorly managed by the Peace and Reconstruction Ministry. He worried that a badly

KATHMANDU 00000841 002 OF 002

managed discharge process could be counterproductive and end with the disqualified joining insurgency groups, particularly those in the Terai.

¶6. (C) Mahara thanked the international community for playing a positive role in the peace process, but said certain countries are now interfering in the process. He said India has become particularly biased against the Maoists. He suggested an objective third-party mediator could be helpful, perhaps from Norway, Switzerland, or Ireland. Although the Maoists appreciate UNMIN's involvement, according to Mahara, it cannot play the mediator role because the NC and UNMIN do not have a good relationship.

CONSTITUTION WON'T BE LATE

¶7. (C) Government instability has stalled the constitution drafting process, but Mahara insisted the process would be completed by the May 28, 2010 deadline. The Maoists are looking for a new system of government that would work for Nepal and sees neither India nor China as an appropriate model. He reiterated the Maoist proposal that future governments should be "consensus governments" (i.e. no opposition parties) in a multiparty state (ref B). He observed that ruling coalitions not based on consensus have historically been short-lived in Nepal.

¶8. (C) Mahara's personal view was that all the parties, including the Maoists, were being pushed by their extremist elements and that the parties were focused only on their self-interest. He hoped the parties would soon understand the need for a more pragmatic approach.

¶9. (C) Mahara asked the Charge for his view of the current situation. The Charge agreed that it was a national imperative for Nepal to develop consensus on the peace process and constitution. The Charge urged the Maoists to discharge disqualified combatants from the cantonments, especially minors. Charge noted American and international efforts to support the peace process, including the USAID-funded Nepal Transition To Peace Forum (NTTP), and offered continued U.S. support for facilitation initiatives.

¶10. (C) Comment: Madhesis and other minorities have

complained to the embassy that the Maoists promised to enhance minority rights during the war, but took no action when they subsequently came to power. It is thus unclear whether they will be able to attract sufficient Madhesi support to regain a majority in the Constituent Assembly, but most observers believe that the earliest the government leadership might change will be after holidays in late September. End Comment.

MOON